

CREATING THE FLORENTINE STATE

Peasants and Rebellion, 1348–1434

SAMUEL K. COHN, JR.



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Networks of culture and the mountains

This book explores two central and interconnected questions well established within Florentine historiography – the rise of a regional state, charted above, and the relationship between city and countryside.¹ Both have roots going back to Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini and both have been enlivened since World War II with new archival research and international discussion. For the second debate, argument has centered on whether Florence viciously exploited its countryside, taxing it to the extreme and thus draining it of its talent, manpower, and material resources, or whether taxation was light and even preferential to the surrounding countryside.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Romolo Caggese argued that the relationship between city and *contado* was wholly exploitative whereby the city drained the countryside of its resources through oppressive taxation.² Fifty years later, Enrico Fiumi contested Caggese's arguments with more archival rigor. In place of oppression and conflict, Fiumi saw Florence's fiscal policy towards its *contado* as benign, maintaining that it taxed its own citizens more severely. But,

¹ On the particularity of city-states in central and northern Italy during the later Middle Ages, see Chittolini, "The Italian City-State and its Territory," in *City States*, pp. 589–602. For a recent review of the literature, see Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Les rapports ville–campagne dans l'Italie communale: pour une révision des problèmes," in *La ville, la bourgeoisie et la genèse de l'état moderne (XIIe–XVIIIe siècles)*, ed. by Neithard Bulst and J.-Ph. Genet (Bielefeld, 1985), pp. 21–34. It is interesting to note the centrality of Florence in this literature even for a historian of Umbria and the Marche.

² Romolo Caggese, *Classi e comuni rurali nel Medio Evo italiano*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1908). On the "classics" of the city–*contado* literature (Salvemini, Volpe, Caggese, De Vergottini, Ottokar, Plesner, Fiumi), see Giuliano Pinto, *Città e spazi economici nell'Italia comunale* (Bologna, 1996), p. 48; and Antonio Ivan Pini, "Un aspetto dei rapporti tra città e territorio nel Medioevo: la politica demografica 'ad elastico' di Bologna fra il XII e il XIV secolo," in *Studi in Memoria di Federico Melis* (Naples, 1978), I, pp. 368–70.

although Fiumi's argument extended to the fifteenth century, his evidence focused on the period before the Black Death.³

From evidence on taxation, the growth of Florence's funded debt, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of an oligarchy centered in Florence at the expense of the territory, Marvin Becker,⁴ Anthony Molho,⁵ David Herlihy, and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber⁶ attacked this picture of Florentine city-country relations, one describing it "as being little short of idyllic."⁷ But with Judith Brown the pendulum swung back to the other side. By viewing in detail one place within the hinterland – Pescia – she argued that the relationship between the dominant city, Florence, and its region was symbiotic, benefiting both center and periphery.⁸ Her most compelling evidence came, however, from the much later period of the Florentine Grand Duchy and not from the late Trecento and early Quattrocento. More recently, historians have again stressed Florence's exploitation of its territory, such that its efforts proved counterproductive both economically⁹ and politically.¹⁰ But these works, like most that preceded them, have failed to draw conclusions about this exploitative relationship over time.

The one striking exception to this historiography is Becker's work on the rise of the "Florentine territorial state," which largely accepted Fiumi's thesis for the pre-Black Death period but saw in the formation of the funded debt (*Monte*) in 1345 a new departure in Florence's taxes

³ Enrico Fiumi, "Sui rapporti economici tra città e contado nell'età comunale," *ASI*, 114 (1956): 18–68; "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," part 1, *ASI*, 115 (1957): 385–439; part 2, 116 (1958): 443–510; part 3, 117 (1959): 427–502, esp. part 3, pp. 440–66; and *Storia economica e sociale di San Gimignano* (Florence, 1961). Also see, Emilio Cristiani, "Città e campagna nell'età comunale in alcune pubblicazioni dell'ultimo decennio," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 75 (1963): 829–45.

⁴ Becker, *Florence in Transition*; and "Problemi della finanza pubblica fiorentina della seconda metà del Trecento e dei primi anni del Quattrocento," *ASI*, 123 (1965): 433–66.

⁵ Molho, *Florentine Public Finances in the Early Renaissance, 1400–1433* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

⁶ David Herlihy, "Direct and Indirect Taxation in Tuscan Urban Finances, ca. 1200–1400," in *Finances et comptabilité urbaines du XIII^e au XIV^e siècle* (Brussels, 1964), pp. 385–405; and Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles. Une étude du Catasto florentin de 1427* (Paris, 1978), pp. 18–19.

⁷ Becker, "Economic Change and the Emerging Florentine Territorial State," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 13 (1966), p. 32.

⁸ J. Brown, *In the Shadow of Florence: Provincial Society in Renaissance Pescia* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 126–76 and 199–202.

⁹ Stephan Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge, 1993); "Cities, Regions and the Late Medieval Crisis: Sicily and Tuscany Compared," *Past and Present*, 130 (1991): pp. 3–50; and "Regional Fairs, Institutional Innovation and Economic Growth in Late Medieval Europe," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 47 (1994): 459–82.

¹⁰ Giuseppe Petralia, "Fiscality, Politics and Dominion in Florentine Tuscany at the End of the Middle Ages," in *Florentine Tuscany*.

and relations with its *contado*.¹¹ Before this cardinal date, Florentine governance both in the city and the territory was marked by a “gentle *paedeia*” or style of rule; afterwards its policy turned increasingly towards bureaucratic control and governmental severity. But for the long period from 1345 to perhaps the end of the Florentine Republic, Becker does not mark any further changes. Neither the Milanese wars, the Florentine *catasto* of 1427, the rise of the Medici, nor shifts with the Laurentian oligarchy registered a shift in the fundamental paths of political strategy set in motion and necessitated by Florence’s state debt that began its inexorable rise on the eve of the Black Death.

This book will contribute to this historiography on taxation and the relationship between city and countryside in two ways. First, it will propose a fundamental break in Florentine tax policy and the attitudes of the ruling elites towards its hinterland that occurred towards the end of the “third war” with Milan at the beginning of the fifteenth century. According to Hans Baron, these same years brought the “early Renaissance” to Florence, registering a fundamental change in Florentine political thought and consciousness, which he named “civic humanism.” But far from studying this change in mentality in social or fiscal terms, Baron hotly denied that it had any relation whatsoever to internal conflicts. The politics fundamental to Baron’s argument were diplomacy and foreign affairs. Baron and later historians such as Antonio Lanza have read this history as the Florentine humanist and literary propagandists presented it: circa 1400 Florentine patriotism was undivided and stood as the last bastion of liberty against Milan’s encircling threat of “tyranny.”¹²

In addition to proposing a new chronology, the opening chapters of this book argue that the city/countryside dichotomy must be refined, even beyond the formal distinction made clear in legislation and tax policy between the obligations of the *districtus* and the *contado* of Florence. While historians have recently shown that Florence did not devise a consistent policy regulating either the fiscal or juridical obligations of its

¹¹ See especially his *Florence in Transition*, I.

¹² Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Renaissance*; Antonio Lanza, *Firenze contro Milano: Gli intellettuali fiorentini nelle guerre con i Visconti (1390–1440)* (Rome, 1991). Among the many reviews of Baron, see Jones, “Review of Baron,” *History*, 53, no. 179 (Oct., 1968): 410–13; Fubini, “La rivendicazione di Firenze della sovranità e il contributo delle ‘Historiae’ di Leonardo Bruni,” in *Leonardo Bruni cancelliere della repubblica di Firenze (Convegno di studi [Firenze, 27–29 ottobre 1987])*, ed. by Paolo Viti (Florence, 1990), p. 35; “Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron,” *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992): 541–74; James Hankins, “The ‘Baron Thesis’ after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995): 309–38; and Ronald Witt, “The Crisis after Forty Years,” *American Historical Review*, 101, no. 1 (1996): 110–18.

subject towns – Arezzo, Cortona, Pisa, Pistoia, and Volterra¹³ – less work has been done on Florence's traditional *contado*. To date, historians have framed this city/countryside relationship, whether exploitative or symbiotic, as though the countryside (*contado*) were a single unit without broad geographic differences bearing different social, economic, and political relationships with the city of Florence. Although recent studies have considered political patronage beyond the ambit of urban politics and urban elites, historians have yet to distinguish these Florentine networks over the contrasting zones of the hinterland.¹⁴

The parishes, *ville*, communes, and towns within the Florentine *contado* varied enormously in economy, terrain, and military importance for the city of Florence. The *contado*'s Quarter of Santa Maria Novella contained towns as commercially important as Prato, which housed perhaps the richest merchant of the early fifteenth century within the city or territory of Florence – Francesco di Marco Datini.¹⁵ Further, suburban parishes whose churches lay within the city walls housed agricultural laborers, but also comprised numbers of artisans and workers, who commuted to the city and were directly involved in its urban economy. Such was the listing in 1487 of a certain twenty-eight-year-old Giovanni di Romolo di Tommaso, a stone-cutter (*scarpellino*) who lived alone in the section of San Lorenzo outside the walls just beyond the gate of San Gallo and worked for Lorenzo de' Medici as the assistant to “Bertoldo the sculptor” at the

¹³ Chittolini, “Ricerche sull'ordinamento”; Robert Black, “Arezzo and the Florentine Territorial State, 1384–1515,” in *Florentine Tuscany*; Petralia, “Fiscality, Politics and Dominion”; and “Imposizione diretta e dominio territoriale nella repubblica fiorentina del Quattrocento,” in *Società, istituzioni, spiritualità: Studi in onore di Cinzio Violante*. (Spoleto, 1994), II, pp. 639–52; W. J. Connell, *City of Sorrows: Clientage and Faction in the Republican State* (forthcoming); Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia: The Social History of an Italian Town, 1200–1430* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 214–31; Zorzi, “Lo Stato territoriale fiorentino (secoli XIV–XV): aspetti giurisdizionali,” *Società e storia*, no. 50 (1990): 799–825; Lorenzo Fabbri, “La sottomissione di Volterra allo stato fiorentino: Controllo istituzionale e strategie di governo (1361–1435),” Ph.D. diss. Università degli Studi di Firenze, 1994.

¹⁴ For the Medici and church appointments, see Roberto Bizzocchi, *Chiesa e potere nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Bologna, 1987). From the letters of Lorenzo de' Medici, see Connell, “Changing Patterns of Medicean Patronage: The Florentine Dominion during the Fifteenth Century,” in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, ed. by G. C. Garfagnini (Florence, 1994), pp. 87–107; “Clientelismo e Stato territoriale: Il Potere fiorentino a Pistoia nel XV secolo,” *Società e Storia*, no. 53 (1991): 523–43; and Patrizia Salvadori, “Rapporti personali, rapporti di potere nella corrispondenza di Lorenzo de' Medici,” in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo tempo*, ed. by Garfagnini (Florence, 1992), pp. 125–46. For relations between the Guidi and their *fideles*, see Charles M. de la Roncière, “Fidélités, patronages, clientèles dans le contado florentin au XIVe siècle,” *Ricerche Storiche* 15, no. 1 (1985): 35–60. But as la Roncière admits, the relations between these peasants and the Commune of Florence has yet to be written, p. 57.

¹⁵ See Federigo Melis, *Aspetti della vita economica medievale: Studi nell'archivio Datini di Prato* (Siena, 1962); and Giovanni Ciappelli, “Il cittadino fiorentino e il fisco alla fine del Trecento e nel corso del Quattrocento: uno studio di due casi,” *Società e Storia*, no. 46 (1989): 823–72.

Medici palace. Lorenzo intervened in Giovanni's tax assessment as well as that of his brother, another stone-cutter also living alone in the same part of San Lorenzo "outside the walls." Both were exempted from paying an *estimo* on their property and were charged a mere shilling (*soldo*) head tax apiece – an amount usually charged to elderly widows or handicapped men without taxable property and called "miserabili."¹⁶

In addition, legislation concerned with the evasion of the gate gabelle shows the mixed status of those who lived "near the walls" (*prope le mura*). In 1371 the councils passed a law that insisted that those living within 1,000 *braccia* of the city walls (which corresponded roughly to the "fuori le mura" districts of the urban churches) would have to pay the gate gabelle "as though they were Florentine citizens living within the city of Florence." Apparently, some in this zone had managed to obtain a mixed fiscal status that gave them the best of both worlds: as "citizens" they paid no direct taxes and as *comitatini* they paid no gate taxes on their consumption of rural produce.¹⁷

The distinctiveness of this 1,000-*braccia* ring around Florence is perhaps best illustrated by the occupations held by those residing within the "outside the walls" districts of urban parishes. The tax officials of 1487 identified two-thirds of household heads from San Lorenzo and Santa Lucia Ognissanti "outside the walls" by profession (81 of 122) – a proportion exceeding even that of city household heads in the *catasto* of 1427. Of these most were artisans involved in commercial tasks associated with the city. They practiced at least twenty different professions ranging from various skills in the textile industry – wool, silk, and linen – to running shops within the city walls; only one-sixth of them were agricultural workers.¹⁸ By contrast, all of those identified by profession in adjacent parishes to the west, Santa Maria a Novoli and Santa Maria a Quarto, tilled the soil as sharecroppers (*mezzadri*) or tenants.¹⁹

Beyond this innermost ring of rural population, other rural parishes still lay within the urban "pieve" of San Giovanni, whose parishioners

¹⁶ Catasto 1123, 452r and 416r for his brother. William Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo. The Genius as Entrepreneur* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 99–100, finds that Michelangelo as well as 94 percent of his sculptors and stone-cutters resided in Settignano and Fiesole (both about 7 kilometers from Florence's center) and must have commuted regularly to Florence to work at San Lorenzo and on the Laurentian library.

¹⁷ Provv. reg., 59, 262v, 1371.iii.23. Also, see la Roncière, "Indirect Taxes or 'Gabelles' at Florence in the Fourteenth Century: The Evolution of Tariffs and Problems of Collection," in *Florentine Studies*, p. 189. In 1373 the ban was extended to 3,000 paces. Unlike Siena and Lucca, Florence did not make a juridical distinction between its nearby rural parishes – the *Masse* or *Sei Miglia* – and the rest of the *contado*.

¹⁸ Catasto 1123, 244r–335r, 400r–81r, and 648r–89r.

¹⁹ Catasto 1124, nos. 12 and 17.

brought their babies to the font of San Giovanni in the city's center as did citizens of Florence. The lure and prestige of Florence's San Giovanni extended even beyond its already extensive baptismal district. Peasants as far away as Impruneta carted their neonates to be baptized at San Giovanni (about 15 kilometers from the city's baptistery), even though Impruneta had its own font.²⁰

Another ring of peasant villages stretched outward for 10–15 kilometers, depending on the roads and terrain. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century notarial contracts show that the majority of these peasants were tied to the city through dependent relations with citizen landlords as wealthy as the Strozzi²¹ and Brunelleschi²² or as common as doublet-makers.²³ Even disenfranchised workers in the wool industry, such as the shearer (*cimatore*) Nero called Trica and the comber (*pettignangnolo*) Giovanni called Malanta invested in rural real estate within walking distance of the city walls farmed by dependent peasants.²⁴

The myriad rental contracts and land sales redacted by the Mazzetti family within the alluvial plains and hills extending from the city walls through the *pievi* of Santo Stefano in Pane, Sesto, Campi, Signa, and partially up the hillsides of Monte Morello show these peasants interlocked in the contractual life of the city. This family's notarial business, comprising well over five thousand contracts contained in fifteen surviving protocols from 1348 to 1426, are filled with *mezzadria* or sharecropping contracts as well as other short-term, non-feudal rents of property. The contracts show a peasantry under the economic and social rule of absentee urban landlords and their agents.

The oppressive side to this relationship is well attested in the number

²⁰ At least four babies from Impruneta were baptised at San Giovanni during the first recorded year: on January 31, 1450/1, February 28, April 4, and May 26; Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo: Registro delle fedi di battesimo, I (1450–1).

²¹ Notarile antecosimiano [hereafter Not. antecos.], 13533, no pagination [hereafter np], 1364.ix.11; np, 1365.ix.4. Later, for Palla Strozzi's properties in this area, see Amanda Lillie, "Lorenzo de' Medici's Rural Investments and Territorial Expansion," *Rinascimento*, 36 (1993), pp. 54 and 65.

²² See, for instance, Not. antecos., 13533; np, 1364.ii.7; and 13521, 124v, 1384.i.14; 1435, 1386.vi.21; 164r, 1388.x.23.

²³ See the many acts of land sales, rent and *mezzadria* contracts initiated in the 1360s and 1370s by the doublet-maker (*farsettarius*) Pierus f.q. Neri with peasants in Sesto and Campi; Not. antecos., 13533, np, 1364.viii.3; np, 1364.xi.16; np, 1364.i.18; np, 1364.i.24; np, 1365.v.14; np, 1370.ix.30; and 13521, 61v, 1374.i.8; 69v, 1376.ix.13; 70v, 1376.x.22; also those of the doublet-maker, Baldus f.q. Domenci Dante and his mother, a *pinzochera*, np, 1373.x.30; np, 1371.iv.25.

²⁴ Not. antecos., 13521 130r, 1385.xi.24; and 13533, np, 1364.xi.14. For other examples of disenfranchised workers in the wool industry with holdings in the nearby villages, see *ibid.*, np, 1369.xi.13; np, 1366.ii.13; and np, 1371.v.8.

of criminal prosecutions against peasants who “neglected” their work, cut trees for their own use, and violated their contracts in other ways. They were subject to punitive action and fines from 200 to 500 *lire* – well beyond their capacity to pay.²⁵ But there was a softer, paternalistic side to these relations as well, illustrated in numerous diaries (*ricordanze* and *zibaldoni*) that advised sons to take minute care in the management of their rural estates and to provide for the welfare of their peasants.²⁶

In addition, the contracts themselves show the close and near-feudal relations between the landlord (*oste*) and the *mezzadro*. Periodically *mezzadri* were required to ride or walk into the city and at the “gate” (*gabella*) of their landlord’s house present their share of the produce at least twice a year along with honorific gifts, such as a pair of capons and five to ten eggs.²⁷ It was from within this ring that the peasants came every morning to sell their produce “that filled every kitchen” and may have led to other social relations as Antonio Pucci’s morning description of the Mercato Vecchio and his pun on “cocina” suggest.²⁸

Moreover, villages such as Peretola and Varlunga and other neighboring villages in the Arno basin just beyond Florence’s suburbs supplied apprentices who worked in the city’s wool and silk industries.²⁹ From these villages, peasants also regularly walked to town to sell or pawn their goods, as did Boccaccio’s protagonist of Varlunga in story 2, day 8, when she needed spending money.³⁰

By contrast, the *contado* encompassed distant mountain communes, such as those in the Alpi and Podere Fiorentino north of the Mugello. These villages lay across several mountain passes from the city of Florence, ultimately leading to the borders of Bologna and the lands of the Romagna lords. Throughout much of the fourteenth century these northernmost lands faded in and out of Florentine control. Even after Florence’s successful war in 1373 to “exterminate” the Ubaldini (the Mugello’s and Alpi’s dominant feudal clan) to outlaw their feudal

²⁵ See Cohn, *Women in the Streets*, p. 25; and Atti del Podestà [hereafter AP], 2208, 1369.vi.21–ix.6.

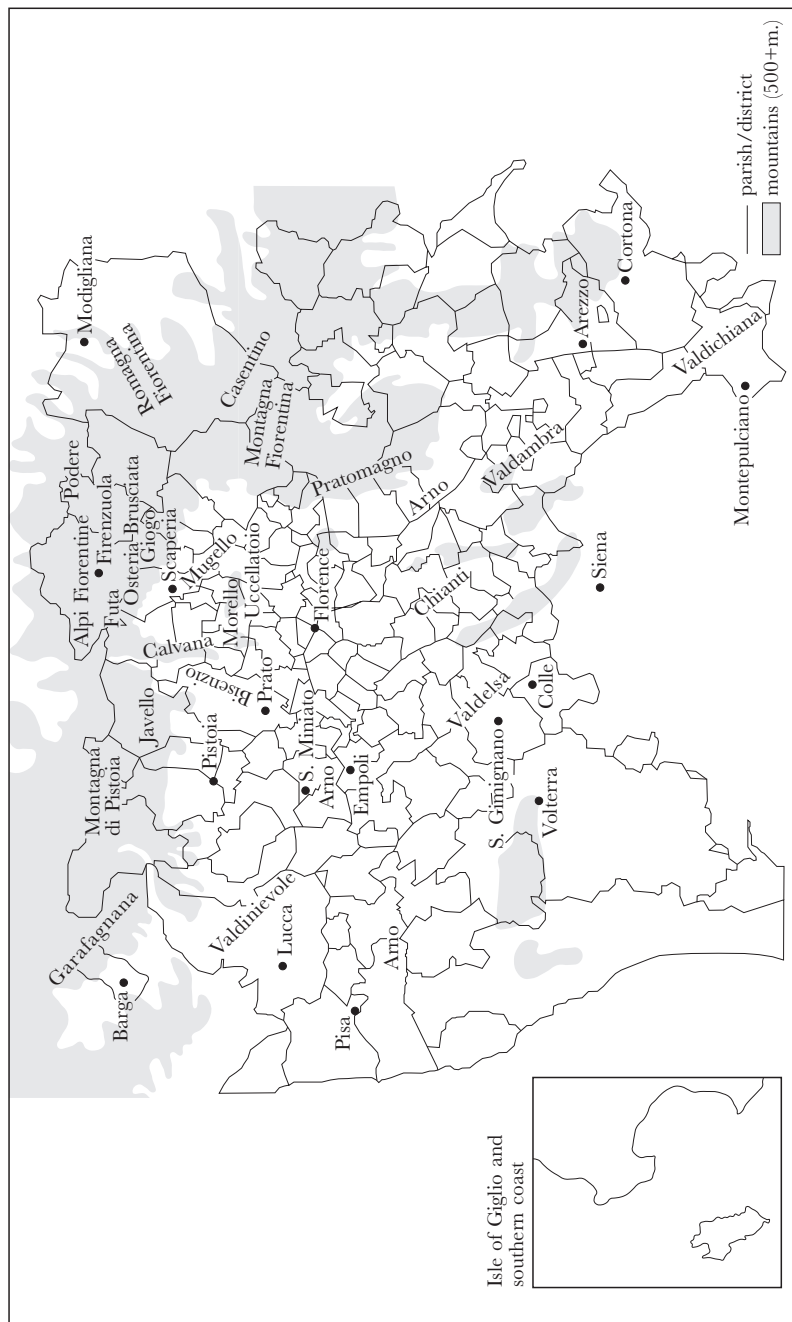
²⁶ Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, *Ricordi*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Florence, 1956); Bernardo Machiavelli, *Libro di ricordi*, ed. by Cesare Olschki (Florence, 1954); Giovanni Rucellai, *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo zibaldone*, I: *Il zibaldone quaresimale. Pagine scelte*, ed. by Alessandro Perosa (London, 1960).

²⁷ Hundreds of such contracts survive in the Mazzetti notarial books.

²⁸ Antonio Pucci, “Proprietà di Mercato Vecchio,” in *Poeti Minori del Trecento*, ed. by Natalino Sapegno (Milan, 1952), p. 405: “E contadin vi vengon la mattina / e rinnovar le cose alle fantesche; / ciascuna rifornisce sua cocina.”

²⁹ Franco Franceschi, *Oltre il “Tumulto”: I fiorentini dell’Arte della Lana fra Tre e Quattrocento* (Florence, 1993), p. 130.

³⁰ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Milan, 1976), pp. 674–80.



Map 1 Florentine Tuscany: physical characteristics

rents,³¹ these and other lords such as the Alidosi della Massa and the Lords of Imola³² continued to hold feudal contracts with peasant “fidei” and “vassali” from whom they collected perpetual rents in kind.³³

These places, still within Florence’s *contado*, were as far removed in distance and social-economic ties from the city as places in the territorial *districtus*. A border village such as Santa Maria a Bordignano was over 70 kilometers from Florence as the crow flies. But with the treacherous roads, tortuous mountainous trails and passes blocked throughout much of the winter, travel time would have made these places further removed than the centers of other city-states such as Pisa, Siena, and Arezzo. Even for those as privileged and well equipped as the early fifteenth-century ambassador Rinaldo degli Albizzi, travel through the Alpi Fiorentine across either the Gingo di Scarperia or the older pass of the Osteria Brusciata was hazardous and time-consuming and mostly limited to the good months of May and October.³⁴

The roads that passed through the upper Mugello and Alpi to Bologna and points further north remained among the most difficult to traverse in Italy until the “road revolution” of the Lorenian Habsburgs during the mid-eighteenth century, when the new Grand Duke,

³¹ On the eleventh-century origins of the Ubaldini and their early conflicts with Florence, see George Dameron, *Episcopal Power and Florentine Society 1000–1320* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. 44, 65, 100–1, and 159–61. For the later period, see Laura Magna, “Gli Ubaldini del Mugello: Una signoria feudale nel contado fiorentino,” in *I ceti dirigenti dell’età comunale nei secoli XII e XIII. Atti del II Convegno, Firenze, 14–15 dicembre 1979* (Pisa, 1982), pp. 13–66; and Giovanni Cherubini, “Appunti sul brigantaggio in Italia alla fine del medioevo,” *Studi di storia medievale e moderna per Ernesto Sestan, I: Medioevo* (Florence, 1980), pp. 103–33, esp. p. 120. On an early fifteenth-century view of the Ubaldini as the tyrants and enemies of Florence, see Morelli, *Ricordi*, pp. 96–8; and *I Capitoli del Comune di Firenze*, ed. by Cesare Guasti (Florence, 1866), I, pp. 88 and 96.

³² See John Larner, *The Lords of Romagna: Romagnol Society and the Origins of the Signorie* (New York, 1965).

³³ See the complaints from the men of Santa Maria di Bordignano, who claimed they paid heavy rents to the Ubaldini of Galliano and to “gli Alidogi dalla Massa e chi del Signor d’Imola.” *Estimo* 218 (1393), 235v. Also, the tax entries of Castro di San Martino lists the amounts they owed to their feudal lords in perpetual grain rents; *ibid.*, 279r–87v.

³⁴ Daniele Sterpos, “Evoluzione delle comunicazioni transappenniniche attraverso tre passi del Mugello,” in *Percorsi e Valichi dell’Appennino fra storia e leggenda. Futa, Osteria Brusciata, Gingo. Manifestazione espositiva itinerante* (Florence, 1985), p. 21, based on Rinaldo degli Albizzi, *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il comune di Firenze dal MCCCXCIX al MCCCCXXXIII*, ed. by Cesare Guasti, 3 vols. (Florence, 1867–73). The route through the Gingo was opened in 1361 (Johan Plesner, *Una rivoluzione stradale del dugento* [Copenhagen, 1938], p. 33) and was the most treacherous of the three major arteries over the Tuscan–Emilian Apennines, see J. Larner, “Crossing the Romagnol Apennines in the Renaissance,” in *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Essays presented to Philip Jones*, ed. by Trevor Dean and Chris Wickham (London, 1990), pp. 147–70. In early June 1433, Ambrogio Traversari, (*Hodoeporicon*, ed. by Vittorio Tamburini [Florence, 1985], p. 114), traveled from Florence to Cavrenno in a day and reached Bologna the next. He was able to repeat this journey again in two days in early September, 1433 (p. 157), but even in good weather he needed a guide to negotiate the mountain passes.

Francesco di Stefano, began construction on a western route over the Futa.³⁵ In the sixteenth century, even after the Medici Grand Dukes improved Florentine roads and invented one of the earliest postal systems of house addresses, Venetian ambassadors still viewed the network of mountain roads across the Alpi and Mugello Apennines “as almost inaccessible for artillery and armies.”³⁶ In mid-century, Montaigne found his crossing over the Florentine Alps from the Bolognese village of Loiano (probably over the Giogo) to Scarperia more difficult and fierce than any he had previously made over the northern Alps in France, Switzerland, or Italy.³⁷

In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries these roads were made even more treacherous by banditry and brigandage. Numerous Ubaldini attacks and robberies of international merchant caravans can be found in the criminal court records and some were so notorious as to be described in the chronicles of Giovanni and Matteo Villani and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, in the poetry of Franco Sacchetti, and in the letters of Francesco Petrarch. Further, the normal economy of the highwaymen (*malandrini*) who lay in wait for merchants crossing the Giogo led to military operations and fortifications on a scale usually reserved for defense against foreign invasion.³⁸

Here, in the highlands, few if any Florentines possessed land from the mid-fourteenth century, when magnate citizens such as the Bardi sold their titles to feudal castles at Mangona and Vernio,³⁹ until the period of

³⁵ Sterpos, “Evoluzione delle comunicazioni,” pp. 15–17; and Leonardo Rombai and Marco Sorelli, “La viabilità del Mugello occidentale intorno alla metà del Settecento: Dall’assetto *ancien régime* alla ‘rivoluzione stradale’ lorenese,” in *Percorsi e Valichi*, pp. 35–49.

³⁶ See Rombai, “Prefazione: Strade e politica in Toscana tra medioevo ed età moderna,” in *Il Libro Vecchio di Strade della Repubblica fiorentina*, ed. by Gabriele Ciampi (Florence, 1987), p. 19; and Sterpos, “Evoluzione delle comunicazioni.”

³⁷ Michel Montaigne, *Journal de voyage*, ed. by Louis Lautrey (Paris, 1906), pp. 184–5: “un chemin qui, à la vérité, est le premier de notre voiage qui se peut nommer incommode et farouche, et parmy les montaignes plus difficiles qu’en nulle autre part de ce voiage.”

³⁸ For Florence’s thirteenth- and fourteenth-century incursions into Ubaldini lands, see Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. by Giuseppe Porta, 3 vols. (Parma, 1990), I, bk. 7, rubrica or capitolo [hereafter r.] 47, p. 341; III, bk. 13, r. 8, p. 307; r. 36, p. 383; Matteo Villani, *Cronica di Matteo Villani*, ed. by Ignazio Moutier, 5 vols. (Florence, 1825), I, bk. 1, r. 25, pp. 48–9; r. 27, pp. 50–3; r. 79, p. 152; bk. 2, r. 4, p. 198; r. 15, pp. 217–18; r. 23, p. 234; r. 33, pp. 251–2; r. 54, pp. 286–7; r. 55, pp. 287–90; r. 69, pp. 310–11; r. 79, p. 323; bk. 3, r. 41, pp. 374–5; Sterpos, “Evoluzione delle comunicazioni,” p. 13. For special fortifications, see Prov. reg. 88, 86r–7r; 1399.vi.17: “Pro hedifitiis supra Jugo Alpium Florentinorum.” The councils allocated “no less than 1,200 *lire*” to build elaborate fortifications at the Giogo pass between Scarperia and Firenzuola to defend this road “against the murders and bandits” of the upper Mugello.

³⁹ See *I Capitoli*, I, pp. 107–8. Bardi e Mangona (Vendita di Mangona) on January 15, 1340 (Florentine style); and Emmanuele Repetti, *Dizionario storico della Toscana*, 6 vols. (Florence, 1833–45) [hereafter Repetti, Diz.], III, pp. 42–7.

Lorenzo, when the Florentine elites began to consider building estates and hunting lodges in the forests and mountains on the Florentine periphery.⁴⁰ The survival of notarial acts from the upper Mugello and Alpi is scanty before the sixteenth century, but we are blessed with the survival of one protocol that concentrated on the villages of the Alpi Fiorentina.

From 1428 to 1435 Ser Antonio di Giusto, who was usually stationed in Barberino di Mugello, redacted 540 acts in his lone surviving protocol. His business covered much of the western Mugello and Alpi from Sant'Agata in the south into mountain villages such as Baragazza across the border in the state of Bologna. In Ser Antonio's business the urban presence in land sales, rents, and other contracts was minuscule. A Bardi, but one of the Vernio branch and apparently not living in Florence, sold a strip of arable land to a villager in Mangona for 15 florins.⁴¹ A man from the Florentine Guasconi family sold a strip of arable land to a nobleman from Migneto in the *Podesteria* of Barberina for 14 *lire*.⁴² Another Guasconi sold a house in the center of Scarperia (*in loco dicitur al Mercatale*) to a spice dealer from the town for 30 florins. But these were the only instances in which a Florentine is found among the hundreds of sales contracted by Ser Antonio.

Further, short-term land rents and *mezzadria* contracts in his records are negligible in number, and a Florentine (in this case, landlady) appears in only one of these contracts. She was a widow from the urban parish of San Simone, but her tenant, another widow, as well as the house and attached properties she let, were not in the highlands; instead they lay in the town of Barberino (270 meters in altitude), south of the Alpi Fiorentina.⁴³ This absence of urban landlords, patrons, and land speculators is in striking contrast to the business redacted by Ser Antonio's colleagues who worked parishes in the plains near Florence.

The Florentines most prominent in Ser Antonio's business were members of the Cattani family. Pellegrino, the son of the deceased Ubaldo and his brother possessed the *ius patronatus* to the parish church

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Lorenzo's abortive attempts to buy land from Vallombrosa at Pitiana; Caroline Elam and Ernst Gombrich, "Lorenzo de' Medici and a Frustrated Villa Project at Vallombrosa," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. by Peter Denley and Elam (London, 1988), pp. 481–92 and for the diversification of Lorenzo's land purchases in the 1470s, Lillie, "Lorenzo's Rural Investments." ⁴¹ Not. antecos., 792, 157v, 1433.iv.11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 174v, 1433.viii.21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 163r–v, 1433.v.24. The one agricultural rent found in Ser Antonio's business was in Le Valle (Alpi Fiorentina). Although by birth a Florentine, the landlady was a widow of the Ubaldini who resided also in the Alpi village of Monte; *ibid.*, 166v, 1433.vi.4.

of San Silvestro at Barberino and “elected” a new priest at the beginning of 1433.⁴⁴ But rather than as land speculators or landlords these brothers appeared as witnesses to marriages in Barberino and as owners of the “palazzo” in the town’s parish of San Silvestro where Ser Antonio often conducted business.⁴⁵ Moreover, despite their citizenship, these brothers were identified as residents of Barberino. As Pucci’s poem suggests, the mountainous periphery of the Florentine state was beyond the pale of citizens’ daily contacts and horizons. From the hustle-bustle of Florence’s central market the furthest places seen by Pucci in his panoramic view of the Florentine countryside were in the hills (Poggibonsi), where peasants brought “so many things he could not bother naming them.”⁴⁶

Through tax records, criminal sentences, and notarial contracts, historians such as Elio Conti, Giovanni Cherubini, and Guiliano Pinto have described the diversity of the Tuscan countryside during the later Middle Ages, the differences in terrain, animal husbandry, crops, work, diet, and to a lesser extent the culture of peasants from the plains near urban centers to the distant mountains.⁴⁷ In surveying the rich diversity of the Tuscan countryside, historians, however, have yet to enter the political realm, to show whether a similar diversity was reflected in the fiscal and social relations with the dominant power, Florence. By investigating ten tax surveys from 1356 to 1487 and variations in rates of taxation before the *catasto* of 1427, this book explores the social, economic, and political diversity within the traditional *contado* of Florence. In so doing, it enters yet another historiography, that of the Mediterranean mountains and the plains: was there a separate mountain civilization and, if so, what were its structures, characteristics, and cultural hallmarks?

The historical analysis of “mountain civilization” must begin with Fernand Braudel, for whom altitude more than nationality distinguished social traits in premodern Europe.⁴⁸ For Braudel, mountain commu-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 150r, 1432.i.21. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 70r, 1430.vii.2.

⁴⁶ Pucci, “Proprietà di Mercato Vecchio,” p. 407: “Ricavi, quand’è ‘l tempo, i contadini / di mele calamagne molte some / da Poggibonisi e d’altri confini; / e di più cose ch’io non dico il nome.”

⁴⁷ Elio Conti, *La formazione della struttura agraria moderna nel contado fiorentino*, I: *Le campagne nell’età comunale*, II, part 2: *Monografie e Tavole Statistiche (secoli XV-XIX)* (Rome, 1965); Pinto, *La Toscana nel tardo medio evo: Ambiente, economia rurale, società* (Florence, 1982), esp. ch. 1, and *Città e spazi*, ch. 1; Cherubini, *Una comunità dell’Appennino dal XIII al XV secolo: Montecoronaro dalla signoria dell’abbazia del Trivio al Dominio di Firenze* (Florence, 1972) and “La ‘civiltà’ del castagno in Italia alla fine del Medioevo,” *Archeologia Medievale*, 8 (1981): 247–80.

⁴⁸ Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, transl. by Sian Reynolds,

nities were poor, self-sufficient, and egalitarian without sharp contrasts in the distribution of wealth. They were the backward and patriarchal refuge of outlaws, harboring “rough men, clumsy, stocky, and close-fisted.”⁴⁹ Along with other niceties of urban culture, religion was here slow to penetrate. “Sorcerers, witchcraft, primitive magic, and black masses were the flowerings of an ancient cultural subconscious.”⁵⁰

Braudel supported these static characterizations with testimony taken from the late Middle Ages through the nineteenth century. Although he called for a historical analysis, claiming that “the contrast between plain and mountain is also a question of historical period,”⁵¹ his own historical analysis was limited to a single paragraph, speculating that the earliest pre-Biblical, even prehistoric, civilizations may have arisen in the mountains and then spread irreversibly to the plains.⁵²

In evaluating the differences between mountains, hills, and plains, the historian is faced straightaway with a thorny problem of classification: what constitutes a mountain village? While geographers and historians usually take 500 meters in altitude and above to demarcate a mountain settlement and 200 for “the hills,” Braudel has rightly questioned this arbitrary standard. In zones such as Colorado or the Alto Adige, 500 meters would constitute the lowlands, while in Scotland, no village in the highlands or elsewhere qualifies as a mountain village by these measures.⁵³ However, to avoid the relativity of geographical location, Braudel falls into the trap of tautology: rejecting a quantitative threshold, he instead defines mountain communities by those very characteristics he wishes to use to argue for a distinctive “mountain civilization.”

Defining the “mountains” north of Florence is less problematic than a global definition. The near sea-level cities of the Arno basin – Florence and Prato (50 and 61 meters respectively) – are the points of departure, and thus 500 meters can readily be adopted to demarcate the mountains.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, how do we classify villages whose parish churches

2 vols. (New York, 1966 [Paris, 1949]). For a survey of trends in the historiography of mountains from Vidal de la Blache’s “possibilisme” to Braudel, see Pier Paolo Viazzo, *Upland Communities: Environment, Population and Social Structure in the Alps since the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), introduction. ⁴⁹ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, I, p. 46. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 51–3. Recent research, however, seriously contests these assumptions: in the prehistoric and ancient period the Mediterranean mountains were less populated relative to the plains than they were after the year 1000. See J. R. McNeill, *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (Cambridge, 1992), ch. 3; and Brent Shaw, “Bandit Highlands and Lowland Peace: The Mountains of Isauria-Cilicia,” *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient*, 33 (1990): 199–233 and 237–70.

⁵³ Ironically, the highest village in Scotland is in the lowlands: Wanlockhead at 421 meters.

⁵⁴ McNeill, *The Mountains*, p. 31, uses 500 meters as the demarcation of mountains throughout the Mediterranean area.

may lie below this critical divide but whose lands extended up mountain slopes to peaks as high as 1,000 meters?⁵⁵ One way around the problem of definition is to rely on what contemporaries called the mountains or “le alpi.” For the most part, this approach has been taken here. Five of the ten mountain villages included in this study are drawn from a zone which had been called the “Alpe degli Ubaldini” and, after Florence’s reconstitution of the *vicariatus* of Firenzuola in 1373, was rebaptized as the Alpi Fiorentine;⁵⁶ three more are from the area just to the south called the *prope Alpes* but whose villages were all above 500 meters and among the highest within the territory of Florence. The other two lay closer to the cities of Florence and Prato and perhaps are more problematic. The parish church of Schignano in the district of Prato at 460 meters lay just under the critical threshold of 500 meters, but its lands climbed the slopes of the Poggio di Javello to 984 meters. In addition, notarial descriptions of land conveyances and the *estimi* of 1401/2 – the first Florentine tax records to itemize the property holdings of villagers – describe Schignano’s property boundaries as “alpi,” and its properties of arable land mixed with woodlands, chestnuts, and highland pastures resemble peasant plots found on the other side of the Calvana mountains in the highlands of Montecuccoli and Montecarelli.⁵⁷ Hence, I classified the village among the mountain communes. Similarly the parish of Santa Maria Morello lay below the critical level, but its fields, pastures, and woodlands extended up the slopes of Monte Morello which peaked at 934 meters, and like Schignano contemporary notarial transactions described its property borders as “alpes.”

Since Braudel’s *Mediterranean*, others have been more historically-minded in their treatment of Tuscan highlands. From archival sources, Elio Conti updated Braudel’s shift of civilization to the plains, finding the

⁵⁵ I have taken the altitudes of villages from *Annuario Generale dei comuni e delle frazioni d’Italia: Edizione 1980/1985* (Milan, 1980) [hereafter *AG*]; its measures are calculated at the parish church or market square, usually the lowest spot in a mountain village. Cherubini, “San Godenzo nei suoi statuti quattrocenteschi,” in *Fra Tevere, Arno e Appennino: Valli, comunità, signori* (Florence, 1992), pp. 145–65, and others have recognized as mountain villages places such as San Godenzio at 404 meters but with lands that climb the slopes of the Alpi di San Benedetto to peaks at over 1,000 meters.

⁵⁶ See Zorzi, *L’Amministrazione della giustizia*, p. 24; Guidi, *Il Governo*, I, pp. 179–213. According to Stefano Casini, *Dizionario biografico, geografico storico del Comune di Firenzuola*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1914), I, p. 5, this district covered an area that was 38,500 *braccia* wide (east to west) and 45,500 *braccia* long (23.6 kilometers by 27.9).

⁵⁷ On these mountains, see Giuseppe Barbieri, “Il Mugello. Studio de geografia umana,” *Rivista Geografica Italiana*, 60 (1953), p. 102; and for their castles, Riccardo Francovich, *I Castelli del contado fiorentino nei secoli XII e XIII* (Florence, 1976), pp. 152–3. For Schignano’s properties, see *Estimo* 222, village 59.

plains still “scarcely populated” from the tenth through the twelfth century, while “in the hills life flourished at a pace that it would never again realize.”⁵⁸ More recently, Chris Wickham underscored Conti’s chronology, adding that “economic integration [between the city and mountains] was far less in earlier periods [the ninth through the twelfth century] and, as a consequence, the economic contrasts between mountains and plains were less as well.”⁵⁹ Yet Wickham argued that “the major difference demonstrated by a study of references in charters, area by area in the Lucchesia and Pisano, is between the plain and the mountains.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, for the territory just east of Wickham’s Garfagnana, David Herlihy has shown the mountains’ historical malleability. After the Black Death and through the fifteenth century, the mountains of Pistoia again flourished economically and demographically relative to the lower hills, which earlier had been the cradle of rural wealth and population.⁶¹

Yet the historian most conversant with medieval and early-modern mountain communities in Tuscany, Giovanni Cherubini, has largely upheld Braudel’s view of the mountains of the Mediterranean. Cherubini’s panoramic surveys of mountain ecology and society extend from Monte Amiata in the southernmost corner of Tuscany to the mountains of Romagna on the southern watershed of the Po valley. While attempting to preserve Braudel’s paradigm,⁶² Cherubini’s descriptions betray the strains and contradictions inherent in these generalizations. His analysis of the *catasto* of 1428–9 shows wide discrepancies in the social structure across the Florentine Apennines from the “dry mountains” of the Casentino in the southeast, where the poor⁶³ constituted 88.4 percent of taxpayers, to the Pistoiese mountains in the northwest, where its percentage fell by nearly half (46.2 percent). Here, those of middling wealth – the “mediani” – approached the poor in number (40.8 percent). He

⁵⁸ Conti, *La formazione*, I, p. 211.

⁵⁹ Chris Wickham, *The Mountains and the City: The Tuscan Apennines in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988), p. 6.

⁶⁰ Wickham, “Economic and Social Institutions in Northern Tuscany in the Eighth Century,” in *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della Toscana medievale*, ed. by Wickham, M. Ronzani, Y. Milo, and A. Spicciari (Galatina, 1980), pp. 7–34.

⁶¹ Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia*, pp. 50–1. For a similar transformation in the Maritime Alps of Piedmont, see Rinaldo Comba, “Il problema della mobilità geografica delle popolazioni montane alla fine del medioevo attraverso un sondaggio sulle Alpi Marittime,” in *Medioevo rurale*, ed. by V. Fumagalli and G. Rossetti (Bologna, 1980), pp. 309–10.

⁶² See his *Una comunità*, p. 170: “Una cosa pare comunque sicura: l’equalitarismo sociale che distingue la montagna rispetto alle pianure dominate dalle città pare anche qui provato.”

⁶³ Cherubini utilizes the categories of property holding devised by Conti from the 1427 *catasto* (*La formazione*, II, part 2, pp. 243–5), which defines “the poor” as property holders with taxable wealth between 1 and 50 florins as opposed to the *miserabili* without any taxable property.

dismisses these variations, however, to argue that “the presence of a few conspicuously wealthy individuals does not change the overall picture in which mountain egalitarianism is distinguished from the proletarianized peasants of the hills and plains.” Yet he never supplied figures to compare this “mountain egalitarianism” with holdings lower down.⁶⁴

When Cherubini later turned south to the mountains of Monte Amiata and the alluvial plains of the Maremma, his data further weakened Braudel’s paradigm. Because of problems of drainage, marshlands, and malaria, the plains remained as the depressed periphery well into the seventeenth century, while villages on the high slopes of Amiata possessed the highest population densities and greatest sources of wealth. Despite the rich commentary of contemporaries such as Pope Pius II and the figures supplied by the survey of 1640, Cherubini did not question his earlier conclusions of mountain poverty, equality, and backwardness.⁶⁵

True, none of the historians of Tuscany cited above have explored the full range of mountain traits on which Braudel generalized. No one has studied criminal records systematically to test whether mountain violence or its control differed in kind or quantity from violence in the plains.⁶⁶ Nor have historians explored the supposed “backwardness” of Italian highlanders’ religious attitudes and practices before the Apostolic Visitations of the late sixteenth century.⁶⁷ The state archives of Florence and Bologna – the records of the *Capitano*, *Podestà*, and the *Notarile* – allow such an inquiry even if not to gainsay Braudel’s generalizations definitively.

⁶⁴ Cherubini, “La società dell’Appennino settentrionale (secoli XIII–XV),” in *Signori, contadini, borghesi: ricerche sulla società italiana del basso medioevo* (Florence, 1974); Cherubini, “Qualche considerazione sulle campagne dell’Italia centro-settentrionale tra l’XI e il XV secolo,” in *Signori, contadini, borghesi*; and Cherubini, *Una comunità dell’appennino*, pp. 127 and 170. At times Cherubini describes the mountain villagers as desperately impoverished; see, for instance, “Appunti sul brigantaggio,” esp. p. 121. From the eighth to the thirteenth century, Wickham, “Economic and Social Institutions,” p. 12, has found that while estates may have been smaller in the mountains, “no backward egalitarian pastoralists” filled the mountains of the Garfagnana.

⁶⁵ Cherubini, “Risorse, paesaggio ed utilizzazione agricola del territorio della Toscana sud-occidentale nei secoli XIV–XV,” in *Civiltà ed economia agricola in Toscana nei secc. XIII–XV: Problemi della vita delle campagne nel tardo medioevo* (Pistoia, 21–24 aprile 1977) (Pistoia, 1981), pp. 91–115.

⁶⁶ Such was the objective behind Arturo Palmieri’s *La montagna bolognese del Medio Evo* (Bologna, 1929), pp. 415–22. He claimed that the Bolognese Apennines possessed high levels of incest and brigandage, especially toward the end of the fifteenth century, and that the population was prone to insurrection against the magistrates. But the work offers no statistics, few citations of criminal sources, and no comparisons between mountains and plains.

⁶⁷ See Susanna Peyrouel Rambaldi, “Podestà e inquisitori nella montagna modenese: Riorganizzazione inquisitoriale e resistenze locali (1570–1590),” *Società e Storia*, no. 52 (1991): 297–328.

In regard to violence, I know of no effective way of measuring it in preindustrial societies. The usual means is through an analysis of criminal records, but before the nineteenth century and perhaps to a large extent even to the present day, these records track the state's strategies of prosecution and social control as much, if not more, than criminal behavior or violence.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, a comparison of the criminal sentences from the lowlands near the city of Florence, and highland zones near the Futa pass in communities such as Castro and Casaglia, do show marked differences in the character of violence, if not in its quantity.

From the surviving sentences of the *Podestà* and *Capitano del Popolo*, lowland villages such as Campi, Peretola, and Brozzi abounded in violent acts of armed robbery and assault and battery in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Indeed, the level of violence counted by fist fights and knifings for late-medieval Campi suggests that the proverb – “Peretola, Brozzi e Campi: the worst rabble god has given us!” – may have had deep-rooted historical origins.⁶⁹ Similarly, based on modern-day impressions of mountain violence and backwardness, we might wish to assume that acts of sexual violence and incest in particular were traits more common to highlanders than to others, but the vicariate courts of the early fifteenth century do not support such images; charges of incest clustered as much in the lowlands as in the mountains.⁷⁰

On the other hand, the criminal acts in the mountains describe collective violence, often listing large numbers of perpetrators and victims, while crime in the lowlands tended to be of an individual character. In the lowlands assaults, house-breakings, or acts of slander rarely involved more than the assailant and the victim, and when they did, the partners in violence as well as those injured generally came from the same village or, if not, from within the same parish (*pieve*). While insurrection was spreading through the mountains of the Pistoiese and the Alpi Fiorentine in 1401 to 1403, the criminal acts for places like Brozzi in the plains described men from the same village “coming to words” which led to blows and sentences with relatively small monetary fines.⁷¹ Such valley violence often touched the lives of women, both as perpetrators and targets of violence. In 1428, two married women, both from the village of San Martino a Sesto, were washing their clothes in the river called the Gravina. One called the other a whore (“Tu sy una puetana”); the other grabbed her by the hair and dragged her along the road also

⁶⁸ See Cohn, *Women in the Streets*, ch. 2.

⁶⁹ “Peretola, Brozzi e Campi: la peggio genia che dio ci scampi!” I thank Giovanni Ciappelli for this proverb. ⁷⁰ Cohn, *Women in the Streets*, ch. 6. ⁷¹ AP, 3886, 12r.

calling her a whore. Denounced by the village rector, they were both fined small amounts.⁷²

Most of the descriptions of these assaults are monotonous and tell us little about the perpetrators' motivations, but some paint small cameos of village life that cannot be seen from other sources. For instance, in 1403 while two men both from the same village of San Donnino were fishing at the bridge on the Osmannoro road, a man from neighboring San Martino (the same parish as Brozzi) approached them with an iron-handled spade, charging that they had no business fishing in that pool since it belonged to him, and threatened one of them with his spade. The second fisherman rushed to his friend's defense with a lance that just happened to be in his hands (while fishing!) and knocked their assailant into the stream. It is clear that these men all knew one another: while the man claiming to own the fishing rights was now floating in his stream, the fisherman with the lance asked with a certain satisfaction: "So Luke, what'd you say you're going to do?"⁷³

Although such cases of violence involving two or three men or women can be easily multiplied, cases of collective violence, whether of a political sort or not, are much harder to spot in the lowlands near Florence for the late Trecento and Quattrocento. The acts that come closest to political violence were occasional attacks on the *Podestà's* police (*berrovarri* and *nuntii*) who came to arrest those who had not paid their taxes or, more commonly, for debts owed to Florentine citizens. Such incidents were usually staged by the wife of the debtor and rarely involved more than family members; when they did, those who gave assistance were neighbors. Yet, despite prior planning, as is often made clear, the courts did not define these crimes as political (*conventiculum*, *conspiratio*, *rebellio*).

In the acts of the *Podestà* that I have surveyed from the 1340s to 1430 I have seen only one case of collective political violence from the lowlands. It is found in a case from the village of Gangalandi, in Valdarno Inferiore⁷⁴ adjudicated in August, 1402. In December of the previous year, the *Podestà* arrested six men, all from Gangalandi who had congregated over eighty people in the village piazza. The men of the village had raised their banners and flags and with offensive and defensive arms attacked the house of a certain Martin and carted off his goods. Unfortunately, the court's description does not say what was on their flags, who this Martin was, what he had done to offend his neighbors, or

⁷² AP, 4392, np.

⁷³ Capitano del Popolo [hereafter CP], 2188, 81r–2r (Inquisition); and 2207, 28v–9r (sentence): "Luca, che di tu che farai?"

⁷⁴ AP, 3856, 48r–9r; see also p. 219.

why the case was described in political terms (*ad invicem compositum, posturam et tractatum et ordinationem* – words that formulaically accompanied descriptions of “rebellion” and occupations of castles taken from Florentine suzerainty). But the Gangalandi incident was the exception that proves the rule. Unlike collective action from the mountains, where social networks could extend over great distances and cross state borders, all the named participants at Gangalandi were from that commune, the place of their armed robbery.

To be sure, violence in the mountains also arose between neighbors and could be as spontaneous as that between the two washerwomen from Sesto. Such was a case from Mangona in 1411, when two men from the village “came to words” and one began hurling rocks at the other.⁷⁵ But, by contrast, the *Podestà* and *Capitano del Popolo* provide a rich array of collective acts of violence from the mountains that crossed parish and other wider neighborhood boundaries, linking highwaymen across the mountainous frontiers of Florence.⁷⁶ Often these bands comprised men who lived on both sides of the Florentine border, as did the cattle rustlers in 1402 who freely crossed the Florence–Siena border to invade various southern mountain communities.⁷⁷ Similarly, territorial boundaries seemed to make little difference to the scores of highwaymen, vagabonds, and insurgents who regularly captured men and animals during the period of insurgency in the Montagna di Pistoia, the Alpi Fiorentine, and the Romagna from 1401 to 1403. Such remained the case certainly through the Laurentian period, as is revealed in letters to Lorenzo when youths from Firenzuola assisted by their friends from across the border in Bologna attacked and injured the *vicarius*’s officers.⁷⁸

In addition, the numerous acts of peace (*pax*) and treaties (*tregua*) among villagers in the notarial acts highlight these differences in social bonding and networks of friendship. In the highlands, such “compromises” over daily disputes could cross parish boundaries and even mountain ranges, as did a “peace” in 1432 whose social bonds criss-crossed the Calvana mountains from the *contado* of Prato (San Cresci de Pimonte) to various points in the Mugello (San Niccolò a Latera, Santa Reparata, and Camoggiano).⁷⁹ These disputes and agreements also drew parties

⁷⁵ AP, 4261, 67v.

⁷⁶ See for instance CP, 2107, np, 1399.xi.8, where highwaymen mostly from the Montagna Fiorentina (Garliano) were supported by a man from San Giovanni Valdarno far to the south and another from the Romagna miles to the north of Garliano.

⁷⁸ Salvadori, “Rapporti personali,” p. 140.

⁷⁷ AP, 3886, 59r–v.
⁷⁹ Not. antec., 792, 138v, 1432.vii.28.

together across the borders of Florence and Bologna. In 1431, against previous “injustices, injuries, and assaults,” three brothers from Barberino in the Mugello along with their children and all their descendants down the male line in perpetuity “made peace, concord, and good will” with two brothers, their sons, and descendants in Baragazza in the *contado* of Bologna, across several Apennine passes from Barberino.⁸⁰ Another truce absolved fines and settled a long-term armed struggle between two kin groups (*consortii*) in the Bolognese Apennines, one from Castel d’Alpi, the other from Qualto. But many of those who stood surety for this “peace” came from the Alpi Fiorentina, and the act was drawn up by a Florentine notary.⁸¹

Other notarized acts show the fluidity of borders and, in contrast to those in the plains, the long distances over which mountain dwellers made friends, gave trust, and engaged in business. When a woman in Florence entered into contracts she first had to abide by Lombard law and select a male protector or *mundualdus* to represent her.⁸² In the plains, such acts of trust usually bonded together men and women from the same parish. In other instances, these rural women chose patricians from Florence (most likely their landlords) to “protect” them.⁸³ But when a woman from Galliano in the heart of the Mugello⁸⁴ wished to sell her house and several strips of land, she contracted as her *mundualdus* a man from Santo Stefano a Rapezzo 18 kilometers north in the Alpi Fiorentina.⁸⁵ Similarly, such long-distance bonds also connected those of the mountain elites. In 1435 a woman from the Ubaldini clan, who lived in the parish of San Bartolomeo a Galliano, entrusted a nobleman from across the border as her *mundualdus* – Lodovico di fu messer Ricciardo Alidosi of Imola (de Alediogis).⁸⁶

Property sales and the termination of agreements (*finis*), usually credit–debt contracts, also show the cross-parish and cross-border character of mountain relationships. A man from the parish of San Michele a Baragazza in the mountains of Bologna sold arable land with vineyards in the parish of San Piero a Cirignano (Barberino) to a peasant from Barberino.⁸⁷ And a man from Montecarelli had business dealings with a man from San Piero Agliana across the Calvana mountains and

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 124r, 1431.ii.17. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 162v, 1433.v.17.

⁸² On the *mundualdus*, see Thomas Kuehn, “‘Cum Consensu Mundualdi’: Legal Guardianship of Women in Quattrocento Florence,” *Viator* 13 (1982): 309–33.

⁸³ Not. antecos., 858, 83r, 1371.xi.24; a woman from Sesto chose a Brunelleschi as her *mundualdus*.

⁸⁴ See Francovich, *I Castelli del contado*, p. 92. ⁸⁵ Not. antecos., 792, 200v, 1434.vii.18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 217v, 1435.iii.25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 156v, 1432.iii.4; this parish does not exist in the *catasto* of 1427; see Repetti, *Diz.*, III, p. 42.